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SUBJECT: DPRK MISSILE TESTS BARELY A BLIP FOR RUSSIAN FAR EAST

¶1. The recent North Korean ballistic missile tests a mere 250 kilometers from Vladivostok registered barely a blip on local radar screens -- both literally on military detection equipment, and figuratively in the minds of area residents. Interfax news agency reported that a military source from the 11th Army (Air Forces and Air Defense) informed them that military monitoring equipment located on Sakhalin and in Primorye was unable to pick up or track the launch of the July 3 and 4 missiles' trajectories. The source suggested that the course of the missiles was too far south for stationary monitoring systems to pick up, and that had the course been more northerly, they would have been tracked. Though RFE Russian Air Defense units missed the them, they were aware of immanent launches as they had received official North Korean notification that shipping lanes off the East coast of North Korea would be closed from June 25 to July 10.

¶2. Despite the fact that the launch site for the missiles -- a military base near Wonsan port -- is located a mere 250 kilometers from the Russian-North Korean border, the general population appears little concerned with the test launches. According to a recent survey, only five percent of Primorye residents named 'the Korean Peninsula' as a potential threat to their wellbeing -- well behind the U.S. (29 percent) 'growing Chinese power' (30), and 'policies from Moscow' (44).

¶3. Consulate contact and journalist Oleg Zhunusov told Poloff that the public has little concern for the tests because they know that any military escalation by the DPRK would be directed towards that country's traditional enemies -- not against Russia -- though surprisingly few take into account that an attack against any country in the region could cause instability throughout the area. He added that the tests are evidence of the Russian Air Defense's outdated air monitoring system, and conjectured that the military may relocate modern monitoring equipment from the Moscow region to Primorye.

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